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Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
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TO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 041418

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, NU, PINT

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NICARAGUA

REF: (A) MANAGUA 0786, (B) STATE 031239

1. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN SPOKE TO STANDING ROOM ONLY AUDIENCE OF ABOUT 125 AT THE CENTER FOR INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS ON FEBRUARY 14, DELIVERING GENERAL SPEECH ON ADMINISTRATION LATIN AMERICAN POLICY. ALTHOUGH NICARAGUA NOT MENTIONED IN SPEECH, TWO MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE PRESSED TODMAN ON NICARAGUA, HOPING TO ELICIT ANTI-SOMOZA STATEMENT.

2. FIRST QUESTIONER ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON CURRENT SITUA-
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TION AND US POLICY, NOTING THAT IT WAS TIME FOR US TO TAKE A STAND. TODMAN ANSWERED THAT OUR POSITION IN FAVOR OF DEMOCRACY IN NICARAGUA WAS CLEAR AND THAT TWO THINGS WERE ESSENTIAL TO PROGRESS: AVOIDING FRESH ACTS OF VIOLENCE, AND ENSURING THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MANY GROUPS OF THE OPPOSITION ENGAGED IN A REAL DIALOGUE. TODMAN ADDED THAT THE US COULD NOT MOVE IN TO IMPOSE ANY PARTICULAR SOLUTION,

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BUT THAT NEITHER COULD WE OPT OUT ON THE WORLD. WE HOPED THAT AN EVOLUTION TOWARD GREATER DEMOCRACY WOULD TAKE PLACE. ASKED HOW WE INTENDED TO DO THIS, TODMAN ANSWERED THAT WE WERE ENCOURAGING BOTH GOVERNMENT AND

OPPOSITION TO TALK. PRESSED AGAIN, TODMAN SIMPLY SAID "WE HAVE SPOKEN TO BOTH SIDES".

3. THE SECOND QUESTIONER STARTED WITH THE PROPOSITION THAT THE "VIOLENT AND BLOODY RECORD OF THE SOMOZA DICTATORSHIP" MEANT IT WAS "CHARMING BUT UNREALISTIC TO THINK OF TALKING". IMPLYING THAT THE SANDINISTAS WERE THE ONLY LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION, THIS QUESTIONER SUGGESTED THE US MAKE CLEAR WE WOULD WELCOME SOMOZA'S OVERTHROW BY ISSUING A PUBLIC STATEMENT NOW THAT WE WOULD RECOGNIZE ANY SUCCESSOR REGIME. TODMAN ANSWERED THAT WE WOULD FACE THAT QUESTION WHEN IT AROSE. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SANDINISTAS WERE THE ONLY GROUP THAT HAD APPEALED TO VIOLENCE. REALISTICALLY, TODMAN CONTINUED, CHAMORRO'S TRAGIC DEATH SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO OVERSHADOW THE FACT THAT PLANS FOR A DIALOGUE, IN WHICH CHAMORRO HIMSELF HAD BEEN INVOLVED, HAD BEGUN TO BE MADE BEFORE THE STRIKE. WE HOPED THIS DIALOGUE COULD NOW TAKE PLACE IN WAYS THAT WOULD ENABLE NICARAGUA TO MOVE TOWARD DEMOCRACY WITHOUT BLOODSHEAD.

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4. AS ABOVE RECORD MAKES CLEAR, QUOTES ATTRIBUTED IN REF. A TO TODMAN (WHO OF COURSE SPOKE IN ENGLISH AND NOT SPANISH) ARE INCOMPLETE AND GARBLED, EVIDENTLY INTENTIONALLY. TODMAN DID NOT ENTER INTO DETAIL ABOUT WHO DID WHAT OR HOW. SPECIFICALLY, THOUGH POINTING OUT THAT SANDINISTAS HAD ADVOCATED VIOLENCE, TODMAN DID NOT SAY THEY HAD "PROVOKED" IT ANY MORE THAN HE SAID THAT SOMOZA HAD "PROPOSED" DIALOGUE OR THAT CHAMORRO HAD ACCEPTED IT UNCONDITIONALLY.

5. COMMENT. EMBASSY SHOULD AVOID BEING DRAWN INTO POLEMICS. OUR POSITION, LIKE ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S COMMENTS, REMAINS AS STATED BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN ON FEBRUARY 6 (REF. B) VANCE

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